

## **GFC Vision Statement**

Various Scriptures

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, September 30 2017

I hope you have had a great time at Family Camp so far. I know your heart has been challenged by the Word. I don't think that any of us would say that we have arrived in the areas of parenting and marriage. I think we could all grow some there. We could all use some help. So thank you Carl for helping us and challenging us in that. I think we have learned so much already that we could just call it a day and wrap it up now, but there is more to come this afternoon with a session on purity, sexual purity, and more to come the next day on prayer. So you won't want to miss that. To do this afternoon's session, we are going to split up the guys and gals. We will both meet here in the Sanctuary, but the guys will go to one side with Carl and the ladies will go to the other side with Joanna and that will be at 3:00. So please be back here then for that. Childcare will be provided. Tomorrow morning at 10:00 am, we are going to have our worship service here in the sanctuary with everybody combined.

What we want to do now for a few minutes is talk about the direction of our church. We thought Family Camp would be a great time to do that. This is a time for family. This is a time to talk about who we are and where we are going as a church. So I want to take a few minutes to do that with you this morning. When I went to Grace Advance Academy this past summer, I asked Carl: "What do you think we should focus on next as a church? What do you think we should do?" And he said "Vision. You need to talk about vision. You need to tell people where you are, and where this thing is heading." And I know why he said that because you can't all get somewhere without vision, can you? You can't get somewhere without some kind of plan.

When I was a kid, we used to take trips on a Greyhound bus. I don't know if you guys have ever had to do that, but we didn't have a bus of our own. So we had to rent one; one of those 60 passenger things. Inevitably, it wouldn't be long before everybody was complaining because half the bus was too hot and half the bus was too cold. Do you know what I'm talking about? Half the bus was burning up because it was in the sun, and half the bus was freezing because it was in the shade. But everybody stuck it out because they knew where it was going. Everybody stayed on the bus because they had a vision of what we were trying to do. I think the church is like that. People will put up with a lot in the church if they have a vision. They will stick it out through a lot if they know what we are trying to do.

To say that another way, no matter what you do in the church, half the people will always be too hot and half will always be too cold. I don't care where you are, that's just the way it is. Half the people will always be too excited and half will not be excited enough. Half will think we are going too fast and half will think we are going too slowly. But here is the thing friends, we are trying to go together. That's why it seems that way. We are all trying to go in unison as a family,

which means that for some it will seem too fast and for others it will seem too slow. For some it will seem too hot and for some it will seem too cold. And that's okay as long as we know where we are going, amen? It's okay as long as we have vision and we go there together, as one. Which raises the question: Where we are going? Where are we trying to get to? Have you ever wondered that? What is the vision for our church?

If we could sprinkle whiffle dust on this thing and say, "This is what we want it to be 10, 20, 30 years from now...", what would we say? What would it look like? If we had three wishes and we could say, "I wish for this, this and this in our church, what would be in the list?"

To answer that, turn in your Bibles to the gospel of John. And as you are doing that, I am going to bounce back and forth between your Bibles and the screen overhead. Because up there is the vision statement of Grace Fellowship Church. Here is what we want our church to be. (This was an assignment I had at Grace Advance this past July; to write a Vision Statement for our church, and here is what I came up with. We will make it into a brochure eventually and put it on the website). The first paragraph says this:

Our Vision is to proclaim "grace upon grace" to Chilliwack, British Columbia, and to the ends of the earth. John 1:16-17 says, "For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."

If you notice in your Bibles in John 1, that phrase was originally said by John the Baptist. Some consider him to be the last Old Testament prophet and the first New Testament one. He was kind of a middle man between the two. He formed a bridge between the Testaments. And he did it by proclaiming grace, or he did it by proclaiming Jesus Christ, who proclaimed grace. It says, "For of His fullness, we have all received, and grace upon grace...", or "grace in the place of grace." "Grace coming out of grace" is the idea here. As soon as you get rid of one grace, you see another one. As soon as you put one grace down, another one rises up in its place. You can never get rid of them. It is an unending supply. That's what Jesus came to give you. That's what He came to do. Smother you in grace. Cover you in mercy.

In the Old Testament, there was a heavy emphasis on the Law. It taught grace too, but there was a heavy emphasis on the Law. Now the emphasis is on grace. The text says it is "Grace that flows out of Jesus' fullness." Jesus kept the Law. He was full of it. He obeyed every commandment. He kept every rule, and now "Out of His fullness, we have all received, and grace upon grace." "Out of His perfection, we have all received mercy...", which is what the second paragraph of our vision statement says:

At Grace Fellowship Chilliwack (GFC), we believe that salvation is all of grace and not of works. We believe it is something that God alone accomplishes in our lives, and nothing we contribute to ourselves. We believe it is unmerited favour, where Jesus earns

the Father's approval and, in His mercy, gives us the benefits of that through His shed blood on the cross and victorious resurrection from the tomb. Since we have received all of this, it is our vision as a church to proclaim grace upon grace in several ways:

Which we will talk about in just a minute. The story is told of a duck hunter who went out into the woods where a brush fire broke out, and he couldn't outrun it. He couldn't get away. So what he did was he lit a small fire around himself so the larger one would pass over him. He burned up everything around him to save the forest. He sacrificed his immediate comfort for the greater good. God did that for us at the cross. Except He burned up His Son to save the forest. He crucified Him, so the flames would go over us. That's what this statement says: "We believe salvation is all of grace and not of works." "We believe God accomplishes it in our lives and we contribute nothing to it ourselves." "For out of His fullness, we have all received it", and now we want to give it to others.

When I first came to Grace Fellowship Church, some of you told me that you felt this was missing from you lives. You felt like there was a huge emphasis on the Law. Like Christianity was a system of do's and don'ts for you. Like it was just a bunch of rules. What that means is that when you read your Bibles, it was like a gold star that you put beside your name, but when you didn't it was like a demerit. It was like a big, fat goose-egg. "Read my Bible today ... got a gold star." "Went to church today ... got another one." "Had my quiet time ... got another one." "Failed to witness to my neighbor ... ah man, I blew it. It's all over now." "Forgot to sing loud at camp. ... Forgot to take notes during a Carl Hargrove sermon ... it's really over now. There is no coming back from that. Call it quits." We don't want to be that way as a church. We don't want to have that approach. The bus isn't going in that direction.

The church is a hospital for sinners. Which means that you don't go to the hospital and say, "What are all these sick people doing in here?" Of course they are here. It's a hospital. Where else would they go? And in a similar way, you don't go to the church and say, "What are all these sinners doing in here?" Of course they are here. It's a church. Where else would they go? It was made for sinners. It was created for this reason. You don't come in here and say, "Oh, I'm a failure ... I don't belong here." No you are a failure, and you do belong here. You have sinned in God's eyes. But this is exactly where you belong because we are all sinners in this room, amen? In God's eyes, we have all messed up and been given grace.

It always makes me laugh when people come to me and say, "I can't come to your church because the people are too perfect there." And I say, "My church? The one that meets on Riverside Drive? Our people are too perfect?" Or they say, "I can't come there because I have sinned too much." "Too much for what? Too much for Jesus? You can't do that. That's not possible. Too much for God? You can't do that, either." Listen, "For out of His fullness, we have all received, and grace upon grace." and that means we are saved by His fullness, not our own. That means we are saved by His perfection, not ours, which means that there is enough for

everyone. You can join our church. You can come be a part of this thing. That's the approach we are going to have here at Grace Fellowship Church. That's the direction we are going to take, and it is going there several different ways.

For example, we proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible. That's where this all begins: We proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible. Our ideas about God comes from the Bible. Our ideas about everything come from there. The paragraph says:

**We proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible.**

Because the Bible is a revelation of God's grace, we at GFC are committed to preaching it in our pulpit and to teaching it in every aspect of our ministry. The Bible has been called the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, and the Christian's charter. It is the Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit, a lamp for our feet, and a light for our path, because it proclaims grace. It loves to talk about the unmerited favour of God and to tell people how to find it through Christ. Therefore, we love to teach the Bible as a church.

I am sure you guys have seen this already in our church. But on Sunday mornings, we read the Scriptures and we preach the Scriptures and we sing the Scriptures. Everything we do goes back to Scripture. Everything we are comes back from there. Our children's classes are all built around Scripture. Our adult classes are built on it. The same thing goes for our youth program. We counsel with it. We disciple with it. We put it on our website, because we believe it is the Word of God to us. It is a revelation of His grace. It tells people how to find salvation through Jesus Christ, and therefore we love to teach it here.

A heavy weight boxer once read the Bible because he was told it would help him win matches. And when it didn't do that, he threw it away, never to pick it up again for years. Until one day, just out of the blue, he read it and got saved because he realized, in his own words, "That the Bible is not my good luck charm. It is the road map for my life. It is not my lucky rabbit's foot, but it is the guide and foundation for my life."

My friends, that's what this is saying. The Bible is the foundation for your life. It is the roadmap to everything. It tells you where the bus should go and what the church should look like. It gives you the finished product; the blueprint for the church. If we want to know what our church looks like, we go here. If we want to know what our preaching and music and children's classes look like, we go here, which leads to the next section in our vision statement.

We proclaim grace upon grace through worship. If you want to turn in your Bibles to John 4. As

Jesus is proclaiming grace to the people, he comes across a man named Nicodemus in John 3. Who, the passage tells us is a Pharisee, the cream of the crop of Jewish society. And then in Chapter 4, he meets a person at the other end. We call her the woman at the well. John says she was a Samaritan woman. She was the lowest of the low of human society because the Jews didn't talk to Samaritans. They couldn't stand them because they thought they were dirty. They were a mixed race, and they definitely didn't like their women. A Jew wouldn't talk to a Samaritan woman, look at a Samaritan woman, or ever even think about having a religious discussion with one. But Jesus does all of that here. And He tells her in John 4:23-24, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

In other words, Samaritans can worship God too. As a Samaritan, as a woman, as someone from a dirty race, you can worship God if you do it in spirit and in truth. You can worship God right alongside the Jews. That was revolutionary at the time. You don't have to clean yourselves off. You don't have to put gold stars by your name. You don't need to change races and become a Jew. You just need to come to Christ. You just need to believe in Him and He will take care of the rest. Which is what the next section of our vision statement says:

**We proclaim grace upon grace through worship.**

Because God's grace is so prevalent in the Bible, we are also committed to emphasizing it in our worship. Colossians 3:16 says, "*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*" and we take that admonition seriously. As we hear the Word of God preached and taught, we respond to it in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We are so thankful for all God has done for us that we cannot help but proclaim it through music and through the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

I know the answer to this but how many of you have ever come to church and sang loud, because you couldn't help it? Anybody? Not because you have to, but because you want to. Not because you have a wonderful voice, but because you have a wonderful God, and you can't help but sing praises to His name. How many of you have ever read something great in Scripture or listened to something great in a sermon and done the same thing? You just start singing. That is what this paragraph is talking about. As we see God's grace displayed, as you hear it taught in the Bible, we can't help but sing about it. We can't help but acknowledge it in song.

In fact, if you do a study of church history, you will see that Christians have always done this in history. They have always loved to sing. Any revival in doctrine has always led to a revival in

music. Any return to Bible knowledge has led to a return to music. Every time God did something great, people sang about it. You see it in the Reformation. You see it in the Great Awakenings, and you see it in the movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. All of that led to newer and greater music. All of it led to worship.

Jonathan Edwards said that, “The best way of expressing our minds to each other as Christians, is through the medium of music.” Martin Luther said, “Next to the Word of God, the art of music is the greatest treasure in all the world.” A.W. Tozer said, “If you are bored with worship, I can guarantee that you will be bored with Heaven because that is all you will be doing there.”

And that is the point of our worship here at Grace Fellowship Church. We want to give you a little taste of Heaven. We want to show you what is in store for you in eternity, through music and the ordinances. We want you to see the greatest treasure in all the world.

And that leads to the next part of our vision statement: We proclaim grace upon grace through evangelism. Not only do we take worship seriously and take the Scriptures seriously, but we want others to do it as well, so we evangelize. We want the Samaritans and the Gentiles to do it too. To say it another way, John Piper says that evangelism exists because worship doesn't. And that's the idea here. We evangelize because people need to worship. We witness because people need to acknowledge the greatness of God. We do it so people will praise and worship His holy name. And with that in mind the next part of our Vision Statement says:

**We proclaim grace upon grace through evangelism.**

Because Jesus Christ has commissioned us to proclaim His grace, it is our vision to evangelize the lost. Grace is best seen in evangelism. When you have experienced the unmerited favour of God, you cannot help but tell others about it. When you have had your sins forgiven and your iniquities pardoned, you cannot wait to tell others how to do the same. Evangelism has been described as one beggar telling another beggar how to find bread, and that is the passion of our church. We love to tell sinners about the bread of life, our Savior, Jesus Christ. John 6:35 says, *“I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.”*

It is interesting that if you read through the Gospel of John, which is quoted in here, you can see that it is all about evangelism. He does it again with the adulterous woman in chapter 8, and the blind man in chapter 9, and the crowd around Lazarus in chapter 11. He evangelizes the disciples all throughout and He gives them word pictures to do it.

He calls Himself the bread of life and the Light of the world. He says that He is the shepherd and

the gate and the vine. He is the resurrection and the life; the way, the truth, and the life. In other words, "I am it." "Salvation is found in Me." "There is no other way to Heaven." And that is what we want to tell people too. That is why we are here. Like I said, the church is a hospital for sinners. It is a rescue station for the lost.

Some of you are familiar with the story of Hacksaw Ridge. During the Battle of Okinawa in World War II, a medic named Desmond Doss singlehandedly saved over 50 men by pulling them off a ridge called Hacksaw Ridge. He actually put them in a gurney and lowered them 300 feet to safety, but through it all he kept saying, "Lord, give me one more. Give me just one more to save." That should be our mantra as a church. That should be our mandate: "Lord, give me one more. Give me just one more soul to save." We are never finished with the tasks. We are never satisfied with the result. There is always room for more.

I told you before about the church that ran out of room. So, one of the Elders said we need to post a sign that says, "No more room. Please go somewhere else." to which another replied: "Yeah, and right beside it, we need to put a sign that says, "And the rest of you can go to Hell."

We don't want to put up a sign like that, friends. We don't want to tell people that they can just go to Hell. To say this another way, our church needs to grow. Not in numbers, but in impact. Not in size but in effectiveness in ministry. If we are not reaching more people today than we did yesterday, something is wrong. And if we are not reaching more people the day after that, the same thing, because living things grow, don't they? My little boys are three and one. And if they ever stop growing, I know that something is wrong, something needs to get fixed. And it is the same way with the church.

When I first came to Grace Fellowship, someone asked me, "What are we trying to do as a church? What is our goal?" And I said, "It's pretty simple. We want to reach as many people as we can for Christ." That's it. Let's not make it more complicated than that. We want to make the biggest impact we can for Christ here in Chilliwack and to the ends of the earth. Nothing else matters but that, nothing else is as important as that is.

And that leads to the rest of these points: We proclaim grace upon grace through service. The next paragraph says:

**We proclaim grace upon grace through service.**

Because we have received His grace, it is our vision to see every member of our church serve one another in love. 1 Peter 4:10 says, "*As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*" God loves it when His people show their love in good works. He loves it when we help, bless, and minister to each other selflessly and sacrificially. God gave everything He had for us

on the cross and we want to do the same thing for others in the church. He held nothing back when He saved us, and we want to hold nothing back when we give to the family of God.

And then we proclaim grace upon grace through counseling. The paragraph after that says:

**We proclaim grace upon grace through counseling.**

Because we are confident that God's grace is sufficient, it is our vision to help each other in the various challenges of life. Not only do we meet physical needs in the church, but we meet spiritual needs as well. Not only do we help people with their bodily needs, but we also help them with the needs of their souls. Romans 15:14 says, "*And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.*" In other words, Christians can counsel each other in the church. The Bible gives us all we need "*pertaining to life and godliness*" (2 Peter 1:3). And we believe that we can use it to help each other conquer sin and live a righteous, God-honoring life.

As I was writing this out, I kept thinking about you because you guys do a great job of doing this already. There isn't a day that goes by when I don't hear about somebody counseling somebody or serving somebody else in our church. There isn't a day that goes by when you don't live this out, and I just want to encourage you to keep it up. You are doing a great job. Just keep it up. Excel still more.

Some churches have ministry all backwards. They think the pastor does all the work, and everyone else just watches. Or the elders do all the work, and everyone else just watches them. Us four and no more mentality - the spiritual elite. But you don't think that way, and I love that. You are all involved in ministry here at Grace Fellowship Church. To say it another way you don't need my permission to serve someone in the church, and you know that. You don't need my approval. You have it. So if you see a need, go meet it. If you see an opportunity, jump right on in and get involved.

Several years ago, a well-known magazine did an article on a church in Los Angeles calling them "The Church of 900 Ministers", because everyone served there. They were all involved in the work there. I think you could say the same thing about our church. We are "The Church of 100 Ministers" or "67 Ministers." I think that's what it came to: 67 Ministers, because all of us are involved. We all minister to one another here. It's all hands on deck, and that's the way it should be. We don't ever want to lose that. As we change and mature and make more of an impact for Christ, we want to keep this the same. This stays part of who we are. And to balance that out, the next section of our vision statement says: We proclaim grace upon grace through leadership.

### **We proclaim grace upon grace through leadership.**

Because leaders are a gracious gift to the church, it is our vision that we follow their loving counsel and guidance. God's grace gives us qualified servants to "*shepherd the flock of God among you*" (1 Peter 5:2). The Lord provides men who are "*above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.*" to serve and guide His people (1 Timothy 3:1-7). It is our job as members to follow them and make their work a joy and not a burden (Hebrews 13:17). We want to acknowledge God's grace in their lives and to respond to them in a God-honoring way.

Leadership doesn't do everything in the church, but it does do some things. It doesn't do all the work, but it does do some of it. Particularly in the areas of shepherding and guidance. It guides the bus so to speak. It steers us in the right direction. Jesus ultimately does that. He is the Chief Shepherd, if you will, the lead driver. But as He drives it, He uses other men to do it too. We call them under shepherds or pastors and teachers and elders.

And that leads to the Last Section we have here which says:

### **We proclaim grace upon grace through equipping the saints.**

Because we are called to grow in the grace and knowledge of God, it is our vision to see our people equipped for the work of ministry. Ephesians 4:11-12 says, "*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.*" This is what it all boils down to: God wants us to be involved in His church. This is where it all leads: He wants us equipped to serve His people. We are saved by grace in order to work (Ephesians 2:8-10). We are forgiven and pardoned and given new life in Christ so that we might go out and minister to others in a lost and dying world.

This is where the bus is heading, my friends. This is what it all boils down to. We want to equip you for ministry. We want you to be involved in the church. Not just attending, but involved. Not just showing up, but actively serving and counseling and teaching each other the Bible. We want you to be evangelizing and witnessing and worshipping the great God we serve. We want you to do all the things we talked about this morning. We want you to put all of these things into practice.

And to do this more effectively, we are starting a new ministry in our church, something we've never done before. We are calling these our "Care and Discipleship Groups." To help our church feel smaller, and to help you get to know one another better and to apply this vision, we are

starting some small groups called “Care and Discipleship Groups.” The groups will meet once a week to talk about the sermons and other topics of theology and the Bible.

To put the groups together, we’ve gone through the attendance roster and put everyone’s name into four groups led by members of the Advisory Council. We tried to get everybody in here, but if you don’t see your name in here, just let us know and we will add it right away. Just contact myself or Jordan Henderson or one of the leaders of these groups.

Now we are going to be telling you more about these groups in the coming weeks. But as I was reading back over the vision statement this past week, I feel like I have given you an elephant to swallow this morning. This is a lot to take in, but they say that the best way to swallow an elephant is one bite at a time. The best way to take on this much is one small piece at a time, and that’s what these groups are designed to do.

Going back to the bus analogy, if you are taking a bus from here to Ontario, you don’t do it all in one day. You make several pit stops along the way. You do it in stages, and that’s what this is: it is a small pit stop for our bus. It’s a stage along the way in our journey. It is one way to help us “proclaim grace upon grace” to Chilliwack and to the ends of the earth.

On Sunday mornings, we will be telling you some more details about this and how it will play out in the life of our church. So please keep an eye out for that. But are you excited about this? Does this sound like something you want to do? I know the leaders are. We can’t wait to get these started and see what the Lord is going to do through them. So be looking out for that phone call, as one of the leaders will call you to tell you when you are going to meet and where. And go online to see the vision statement. Or come see me if you have any questions. But for now, let’s close in a word of prayer and ask the Lord’s blessings in this new step in the life of our church.